

# ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC CHURCH

(ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON)

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 17, 2023



4600 REED ROAD, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77051-2857  
Parish Office: 713.738.2311; Fax: 713.738.3337  
CCE Office: 713.731.2775; SVdP Food Pantry: 713.731.2716  
Parish Hall: 713.731.2725  
WEB Address: <http://www.sfxhouston.com>  
E-MAIL: [stfrancishou@sfxhouston.com](mailto:stfrancishou@sfxhouston.com)  
Parish Office Hours: Tues-Wed 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
Fri 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.; Closed on Mon & Thur  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/StFrancisXavierCatholicChurchHouston> YouTube: St. Francis Xavier Houston

## MISSION STATEMENT

*We, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as expressed in the beliefs and traditions of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Through a passion for righteousness and consciousness of duty to God, we uphold the faithful worship of God in our mission to our church family and the Sunnyside Community.*

## PASTOR:

Vy. Rev. Michael Thompson, SSJ

## DEACONS:

Michael V. Jenkins

Darryl K. Drenon

Frank J. Laugermann (Retired)

## PARISH SECRETARY

Shirley M. Foreman.....x113

## DIR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Unella Baber.....x103

## ADULT FORMATION (RCIA)

Deacon Michael V. Jenkins

## SVdP FOOD PANTRY

Curtis Jones 713.731.2716

## CONTRIBUTIONS/MEMBERSHIP

Agnes Thompson

## HALL MANAGER

Hilton S. Williams 713.542.0120

## PLANT MANAGER/MAINTENANCE

Curtis Jones

## WEEKEND MASS SCHEDULE

Sat: Vigil 5:00 p.m.

Sun: 7:30 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 12:15pm

## WEEKDAY MASS SCHEDULE

Weekday: 7:00 a.m.

First Friday: 7:00 a.m.

Holy Days: 7:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m.

## CONFESSIONS

One (1) hour before Weekend Masses or by appointment

## ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT:

First Friday: 7:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

## CHOIR REHEARSALS:

### Adult Choirs

Wednesdays: 6:30p.m.

Thursdays: 7:00p.m.

### Youth Choir

4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays: 12:00 Noon

## CHOIR DIRECTORS:

Jerry Givens 281.772.9276

Daniel Guerrero 281.723.9948

Mikayla Peugh 832.920.6912

## BIBLE STUDY/ADULT CATHECHISM:

**SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

## VISITATION OF THE SICK

Communion for the sick and shut-in is available. Please call the parish office to make arrangements.

## SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Please call the parish office for information. Preparation classes are required for parents and godparents. Classes are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays of the month from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Call the Parish Office to register for the class.

## SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

Please contact a priest a minimum of six months prior to your proposed wedding date.

## WELCOME VISITORS/NEWCOMERS

To register, call or come by the parish office or visit our website at: [www.sfxhouston.com](http://www.sfxhouston.com)

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**MASS INTENTIONS**

**SAT. 12/16/2023 5:00PM**  
*Michael Albert (D)* – Rita Albert  
*Alton Albert, Jr. (D)* – Rita Albert  
*Joseph & Earlene Duplechain*  
 The Duplechain Family  
*Howard L. Prescott (L)* – Wanda Johnson  
*Kristina M. Chaney (D)*  
 Family & Friends

**SUN. 12/17/2023 7:30AM**  
*Gary Charles (L)* – The Charles Family  
*Kristina M. Chaney (D)*  
 Family & Friends  
*Hal Tracy Bobino (D)* – Family & Friends  
*Sam & Geraldine Lewis (D)*  
 Jason & Natarsha Lewis  
*Alonzo Richardson (D)*  
 Marian Richardson & Family

**SUN. 12/17/2023 10:00AM**  
*People of the Parish*

**SUN. 12/17/2023 12:15PM**  
*Rev. Kenneth J. Howard, SSJ (L)*  
 Bonnie & James Jefferson  
*Helen Foreman Orsot (D)*  
 Tywana Navy  
*Therese Jenkins (D)* – M. Chaney  
*Vy Rev. Michael K. Saah-Buckman SSJ(L)*  
 M. Chaney  
*Rev. Fr. John Patrick Tindana (L)*  
 M. Chaney

**MON. 12/18/2023 7:00AM**  
*Joyce Berotte (L)* – Tywana Navy  
*Tnyang K. Smart (L)* – P.A. Piper

**TUE. 12/19/2023 7:00AM**  
*Joe Raiborn (L)* – Tywana Navy  
*Therese Jenkins (D)* – M. Chaney

**WED. 12/20/2023 7:00AM**  
*Joseph Sias, Jr. (D)* – Mary Sias  
*Jessie J. Bush (D)* – P.A. Piper

**THUR 12/21/2023 7:00AM**  
*Joseph Sias, Jr. (D)* – Mary Sias  
*Therese Jenkins (D)* – M. Chaney

**FRI 12/22/2023 7:00AM**  
*Therese Jenkins (D)* – M. Chaney  
*Liz Peterson (L)* – M. Chaney

**ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTERS****DEC 16 - 17**

5:00pm.....**Ruth Celestine & Phyllis Moore**  
 7:30am.....**Herbert & Delores Archer**  
 10:00am.....**Audry Hill**  
 12:15pm.....**Kevin Payton**

**DEC 23 - 24**

5:00pm.....**Patricia Session**  
 7:30am.....**Red Simpson & William**  
 10:00am.....**Vea Barksdale**



Donald Abraham, Dcn Alfred Abram, Akaycia Addison, Azielee Addison, Kayne Addison, Nathan Addison IV, Alex Alfred, Vea Barksdale, Kelly Batiste, Hazel S. Brown, Savannah Blackwell, Kenyatta Brown, Robert Brown, Amber Byas, Julius Cadoree, Margaret Cadoree, Nancy Calvin, Sterling Certenberg, Dalton Cooper Jr, Frank Davis Sr, Rev. Henry Davis SSJ, Marlene Davis, Lois Epps, Allison Eskine, Stanley Eskine Jr, Annabelle Fontenot, Paul Albert Forbes, Lawrence Frank, Charlotte Gilbert, Anthony Gobert, Tristian Gore, Geraldine Guillory, Beulah Hadrick, Mary Hamilton, Mason Harrison, Alvin J. Hebert, Donald Henderson, Floyd Henderson, Anthony Hicks, Crystal Jackson, Natalie Johnson, Brooke Joseph, Shirley Ann Joseph, Ann Kennerson, Leo Kennerson Jr, JoAnn LaSane, Roy Lee, Hilary & Pat Ledet, Hazel Lewis, Laurenzia Lewis, Jimmie Mack, Eugene Mallory, Charles Martin, Shannon Martin, Diane Miles, Cookie Mooring, Vy. Rev. William L. Norvel SSJ, Carolyn Ollison, Betty Patrick, Angela Pena, Cynethia Pichon, Percy Pichon Sr, Robin Pichon-Mosley, Catherine Pierre, Mildred Pierre, Marcelle Prevost, Melody Ratcliff, Elise Richmond, John & Christine Roberts, Oliver Rose, Brian Russell, Grace Russell, Vy. Rev. Michael K. Saah-Buckman SSJ, Mary Sias, Lillie Sims, Joyce Smith, Joyce Stagg, Jeanette Steptoe, Mackenzie Swanks, Kennedi Swanks, Erma Taylor, Craig Temple, Melvin Thomas, Irma Toliver, Gemma Walcott, Marie White, Agnes Williams, Patricia Williams, Terrell Wilson, Janice Woods, and all the sick and shut-in in our parish family. **Let us Know:** Call the Parish Office when you and/or a family member are ill, in the hospital, or having surgery. **After 30 days, please call the office to remain on this list.**

**Lord, we pray for all our military service members.**

**Army:** Barbara Baber, Sade Beck, Wadie Troy Butler, Patrick Clay Jr, Kalah A. Guidry, Kerry Hubbard, Kory Hubbard, LaTroy King, Gary Christian Robertson, Anthony Lamar Smith II, Jordan T. McCorkle, Essence L. Casteel **Navy:** Alvin Balthazar, Debreanna Brown, Jermaine Ceaser, Kevin Crockett, Courtney Harris, Nia D. Hawkins, Xavier Henry, Randolph J. Navy III, Anthony N. Russell **Air Force:** Roderick Jones, Joshua Creeks, Joffre Lander **Marines:** Reginald Ward

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

On Gaudete Sunday, a theme of joy runs through our readings. Isaiah, returning to the promised land after years of exile, describes the wonders God will accomplish. In the psalm we sing that our souls rejoice in our God. Paul closes his letter to the Thessalonians by reminding them to rejoice always. Finally, we hear John the Baptist testify that he is not worthy to even untie the sandal strap of the One who is coming, the light, the Christ. May the joy we hear in God's word rub off on us.

**READINGS****FOR THE WEEK**

- **Sunday – December 17**  
*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent*  
 Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11  
 (Psalm) Luke 1:46-50, 53-54  
 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
 John 1:6-8, 19-28
- **Monday – December 18**  
 Jeremiah 23:5-8  
 Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19  
 Matthew 1:18-25
- **Tuesday – December 19**  
 Judges 13:2-7, 24-25  
 Psalm 71:3-6, 16-17  
 Luke 1:5-25
- **Wednesday – December 20**  
 Isaiah 7:10-14  
 Psalm 24:1-6  
 Luke 1:26-38
- **Thursday – December 21**  
*Saint Peter Canisius, Priest, Doctor of the Church*  
 Song of Songs 2:18-24 or  
 Zephaniah 3:14-18  
 Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21  
 Luke 1:39-45
- **Friday December 22**  
 1 Samuel 1:24-28  
 (Psalm) 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-7, 8  
 Luke 1:46-56
- **Saturday December 23**  
*Saint John of Kanty, Priest*  
 Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24  
 Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10, 14  
 Luke 1:57-66



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December 18<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>  
January 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>

**NO CCE - CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY**



Nora Lilian Garner (11yrs), Nehemiah Sinclair-Deshaun Garner (6yrs) and Natalynn Kelsie Garner (14yrs), received the Sacrament of Baptism on Saturday, December 9, 2023. They are the children of Nathan Deshaun Garner and Amanda Renee Jolivet.



Paisley Lauren Chioma Goins (4yrs) received the Sacrament of Baptism on Sunday, December 10, 2023. She is the daughter of Tiffany Achamba. Godparents are Austin and Michelle Nwokobia.



### RCIA RITE OF WELCOMING

The St. Francis Xavier Parish family welcomed (Front Row L-R): **Arieux Calhoun, Kelvin Demerson, Denzale Chevis** (Tierra Ladet, Catechist); (Back Row L-R): **Sakira Coleman**, (Dcn. Michael Jenkins) and **Benjamin Familuyi** at the 5:00pm Mass on December 9, 2023, as they publicly declared their intention to continue their journey toward full communion with the Catholic Church.



### Dates to Remember

**December 24, 2023 – Christmas Eve**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent**

**Morning Mass – 7:30am & 10:00am**  
**NO 12:15PM MASS**

**December 25, 2023-Christmas Day**

**NO MIDNIGHT MASS**

**Christmas Day Mass – 10:00am**

**January 1, 2024-Solemnity of Mary**

**New Years Day Mass – 10:00am**



### CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Please remember to use your Christmas Flowers/Decorations envelope to sponsor the Christmas Poinsettias in Honor or in Memory of your loved one. The minimum donation is **\$10.00**.



**St. Francis Xavier Sisters in the Spirit** give a special thanks to the parishioners for their contributions towards our **Winter Coat Drive**. Coats were distributed to Woodson Elementary School students on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

### ATTENDANCE

In-person Mass attendance on Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup> was **291** and the 7:30am Sunday Mass Livestream received **69** views online. Please join us via YouTube Livestream, or bring a friend to come worship with us in the church.



If you will need a copy of your 2023 contribution statement for tax purposes, please call the Parish Office after **December 31<sup>st</sup>** at (713) 738-2311. Statements will be sent only upon request. **Please note: Contributions received after December 31<sup>st</sup> will not be reflected on statements for 2023.**

### Did you know that Catholics can make an Act of Spiritual Communion?

When unable to receive Holy Communion, pray the prayer below:

#### A Prayer for Spiritual Communion

**My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, Come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen**

### Stewardship Reflection

That we realize suffering is a gift and helps us build empathy for others and build our dependence on God. "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 This scripture reading sums up Stewardship. "Rejoice always" means place your trust in God; He will provide all that you need. "Pray constantly" means prayer should be a running conversation with God throughout the whole day, every day. "Give thanks in all circumstances" means even in bad situations, thank God. Suffering a little bit helps build empathy for others in similar situations and shows our dependence on God.



We are fast approaching the end of DSF 2023! As of December 12, 2023, only **118** families have pledged or contributed to this year's DSF campaign. The 2023 Diocesan Services Fund (DSF) Campaign ends on December 31<sup>st</sup>. We are exactly **50%** paid toward our Goal of **\$67,000.00**. We are left with **\$33,577.00** to reach our DSF goal. If you have not yet had an opportunity to donate, please consider sending your donation this week. You can mail it directly to the Archdiocese at P O Box 4681, Houston, TX, 77210-4681. Please identify **St. Francis Xavier** on your payment. Use the QR Code here to pay online.





## ***Finding Our Personal Truth***

**Deacon Darryl K. Drenon**

Happy Gaudete Sunday! Today is Gaudete Sunday or Rejoicing Sunday. Pope Francis calls it “Sunday of Joy”. Why joy? Because our expected guest has almost arrived.

And brothers and sisters, we can have joy today. We can have joy in knowing that we are unconditionally loved. And who unconditionally loves us? Jesus! He loves us and nothing like...sin, sickness, failure, emotional distress, or even death...can take that love away. This is joy.

And our joy can be present even during sadness, even during the turmoil in our country today. We have war all around us in the world in Israel, in the Ukraine, and conflict between China and Taiwan. It's a lot. But our “Sunday of Joy” today reminds us to think of all the good things that life has given us.

We can, during this season of Advent, joyfully reflect on our annual celebration of Christ being born and we can anticipate Christ's victorious return. We can also introspect on our where we are in this journey on earth. Who am I? (as was asked in today's Gospel from John)

### **Finding our personal truth**

Brothers and sisters, children are great with questions. My daughter Brionne asks tons of them. As any parent knows they can ask the most profound questions in the simplest of ways. We all ask questions because, at heart, we have an instinct for seeking and searching after truth. This is a life-long search. We can never get to the point in this life where we can say, ‘I now have the total truth.’ The gospel declares that God is truth — and God is always beyond us. We can never fully grasp God with our minds or our hearts. Yet we have to be faithful to the search for truth, even if along the way we find ourselves making painful discoveries that involve letting go of long-held and cherished convictions. We keep trying to come closer to the truth, the truth about our world, about each other, about ourselves as individuals, and about God. We keep questioning in the hope that our questioning will bring us closer to the truth.

In our search for our own personal truth, two of the big questions that drives us are, ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Why am I doing what I am doing?’ We seek after our identity, in the broadest sense of that term, and we try to clarify for ourselves the ultimate purpose that drives all we do and say. In today's gospel, those two big questions are put to John the Baptist by

the religious authorities, “**Who are you?**” and “**Why then do you baptize...?**” In answer to the first question, John began by declaring who he was not. He was clear that he was not the Christ, the Messiah. John did not try to be more than he was. Later on, in the gospel of John, using an image drawn from a wedding celebration, he would say of himself that he was not the bridegroom, only the friend of the bridegroom who rejoices at the bridegroom's voice. In today's gospel John declares himself to be the voice crying in the wilderness; he is not the Word, only the voice; he is not the light, only the witness to the light. When John was asked why he was doing what he was doing, why he was baptizing, he declared that he baptized to make known the ‘one who stands among you, unknown to you.’ He did what he was doing to open people's eyes to the person standing among them, to the Messiah who was in their midst without their realizing it. There was a great light shining among them that many were unaware of, and John had come to bear witness to that light. John did what he did because of who he was. The answer to the question, “**Why then do you baptize...?**” flowed from the answer to the more fundamental question, “**Who are you?**”

“**Who are you?**” is a question we can answer at many different levels. We can simply give our name or give our parents' names; we can answer it by giving our professional qualifications, or by naming the role or the position we have in life. Yet, the deepest level, the most fundamental level, at which we can answer that question is the spiritual level. Who am I at that deepest, most spiritual, level of my being? Who am I before God? Who is God calling me to be? Here, John the Baptist, the great Advent saint, can be of help to us. He articulates for us who each one of us is in virtue of our baptism, who God is calling us to be. No more than John the Baptist, we are certainly not the Messiah. We are not the light. (Although we can be ‘the light’ as Christ's disciple, Amen.) We know only too well the areas of darkness in our lives and in our hearts. However, like John the Baptist, we are a witness to the Light. Even though we are all far from perfect, we are, nonetheless, called to be a witness to Christ.

John the Baptist says in today's gospel, “**but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me...**” The Lord stands among all of us, but he remains unknown to many. Our calling is to make him known, to allow him to shine forth in our world through our lives. John spoke of himself as a voice crying in the wilderness. John used his voice to make known the light. We too are asked to use our voice to make Christ known. It does not mean that we stand on the corner of Reed Road & Cullen and preach. Rather we use the gift of communication that we have, the gifts of speech and writing, to proclaim the person of Christ, his world view, his values and his attitudes. In what we communicate and how we communicate it, we allow the Lord to communicate through us. Who we are as witnesses to the light, as the voice for the Word, shapes how we live and explains why we live the way we do. The answer to the question, “**Who are you?**” grounds the answer to the question, ‘Why are you doing what you are doing?’ Advent is a good time to reclaim our fundamental identity, our Christ identity. If Jesus is to be born anywhere today, it will be in each one of us.





## JOYFUL CELEBRATION

### Deacon ordained for Josephite ministry

By Susan McInerney

African and Gospel hymns wove a tapestry of praise Dec. 3 at Church of the Incarnation in Washington, D.C. The congregation clapped and sang. The joyful sounds anticipated the ordination of Josephite Brother Dominic Tochi Njoku to the transitional diaconate. The liturgical celebration marked the final step before Deacon Njoku is expected to be ordained a Josephite priest next year, destined to serve the African American community in the United States. The new deacon said he felt called to minister in the United States rather than his native Nigeria.

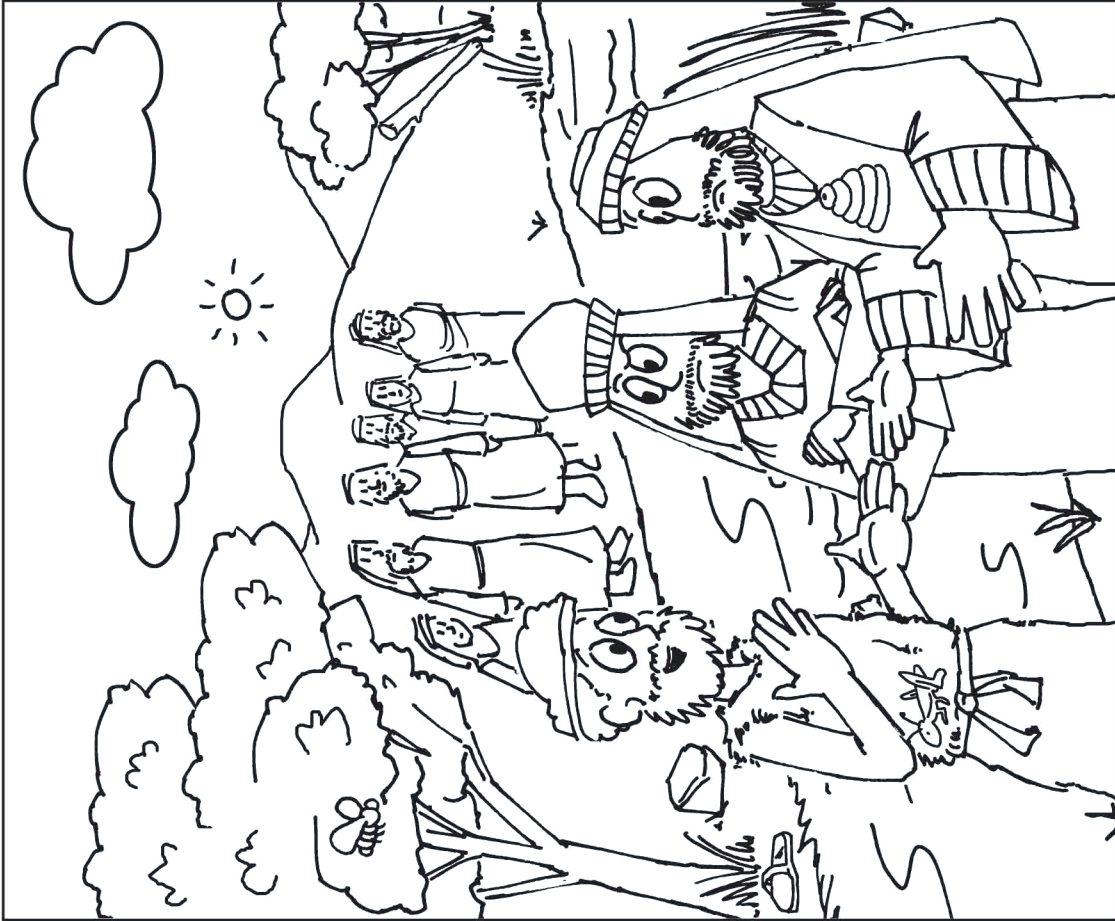


"I feel strongly convinced that God wants me to not only be a priest but a missionary priest," Deacon Njoku told The Josephite Harvest, "and the diaconate ordination is a step toward being a missionary priest as a Josephite." The theme of the ordination Mass and the celebration to follow flowed from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, when the Lord asks, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" And the prophet answers, "Here I am; send me!" (Isaiah 6:8). During the ordination liturgy, Deacon Njoku lay prostrate in front of the sanctuary while members of the congregation chanted the Litany of the Saints. Bishop Ricard laid his hands on the new deacon, the "essential act" of the sacrament of Holy Orders. Deacon Njoku was dressed in vestments for the office of the diaconate. Bishop Ricard drew on the Book of Numbers in his homily, noting that while the Lord gave a portion of the Promised Land to 11 of the 12 Tribes of Israel, Levi and his sons received no portion of the land. Why? Because the Lord was their portion. "Which is why we take these steps, so that our mind, our heart, our intention, our imagination, our desire will be for the Lord," he told Deacon Njoku and the congregation. "Our portion is the Lord, the Lord alone." The bishop called on the congregation to pray that the Holy Spirit will come to Deacon Njoku and enable him "to live this life." While his family overseas wasn't able to attend his ordination, they were able to watch via the church's YouTube channel, said Stefanie Miles, a friend of Deacon Njoku who was in charge of making the event available on social media. Deacon Njoku did not always plan to become a priest. Originally, he wasn't open to it, he said. "I went to minor seminary but at some point, I was thinking about going to university to study accounting," he recalled. But in prayer he felt God was calling him back to the seminary. He learned about the Josephites from Sister Lucy of the Daughters of Charity of the Most Precious Blood, who was in his parish, St. Michael in Imo State in eastern Nigeria. "She was like an elder sister to me," he said. And that is the thread that runs through his studies, parish life and education. There is less talk of people being 'friends' and more talk of people being brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers, daughters and sons in the Lord. In his ministry as a deacon, the newly ordained clergyman said he's looking forward to serving the people of God by handing down the deposit of faith through the rich spirituality of the African American community. "There is a rich way of communicating with God that I can relate to as a Catholic and an African," he said. "There is something about us as the people of God regardless of race, culture and background that helps us remain Catholic. There is something in African American culture and spirituality that helps us to build up the body of Christ as Catholics." After the ordination, Josephites, friends and supporters gathered for a celebration. Myra Miles, a parishioner at Church of the Incarnation, said, "He's an ideal seminarian. In him you see humility and perseverance. He is good at listening, and he is approachable."

*Deacon Dominic is currently assigned to serve at Corpus Christi Epiphany Church and St. Augustine High School, both in New Orleans.*

John said that Jesus would come after him.

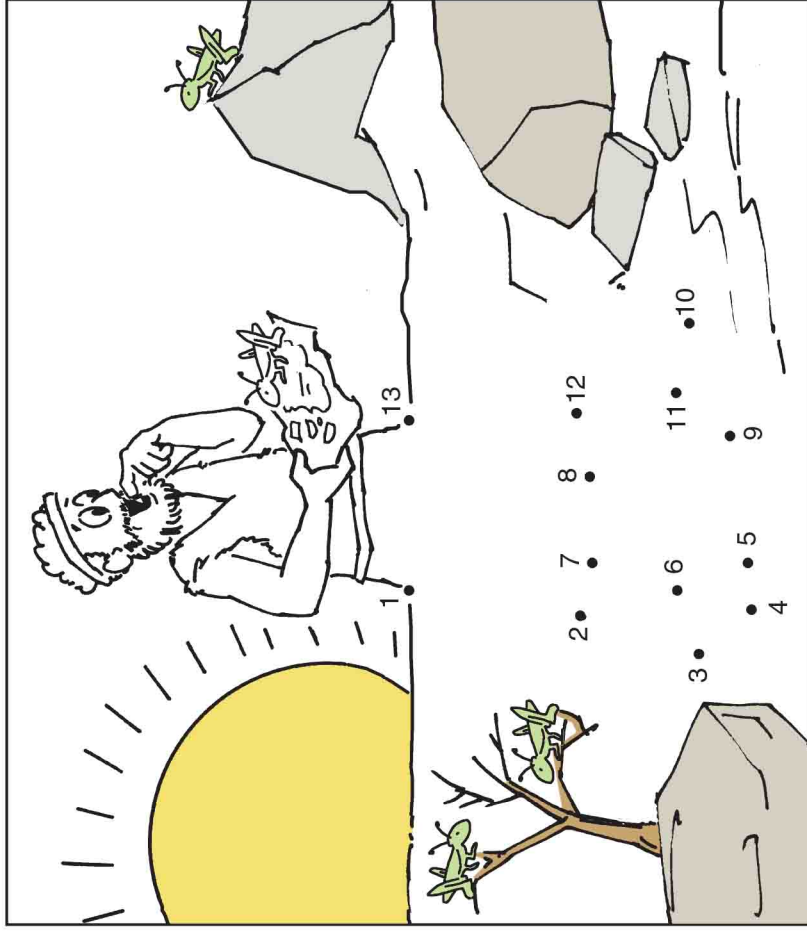
Find and circle these hidden objects in the picture.



## John the Baptizer

John the Baptist  
was sent to tell about Jesus.

Connect the dots. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13



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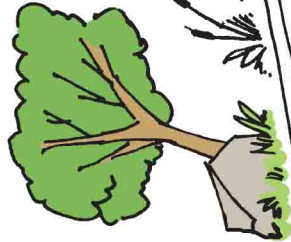
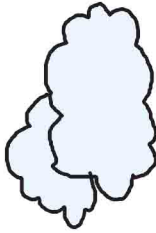
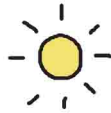


John said, "I baptize with water, but among you stands One you do not know." John was referring to Jesus.

Find the underlined words in the puzzle.

They are → ← ↗ ↘ ↖ ↙ ↕ ↔

Q	R	P	W	Y	Z	K	S
W	N	S	I	O	J	D	U
D	N	O	T	U	N	C	S
R	O	B	H	A	D	K	E
E	Z	I	T	P	A	B	J
T	F	S	J	E	N	O	K
A	M	O	N	G	H	M	W
W	Z	K	J	N	B	D	L



# Children's Worship Bulletin™

Ages 7+

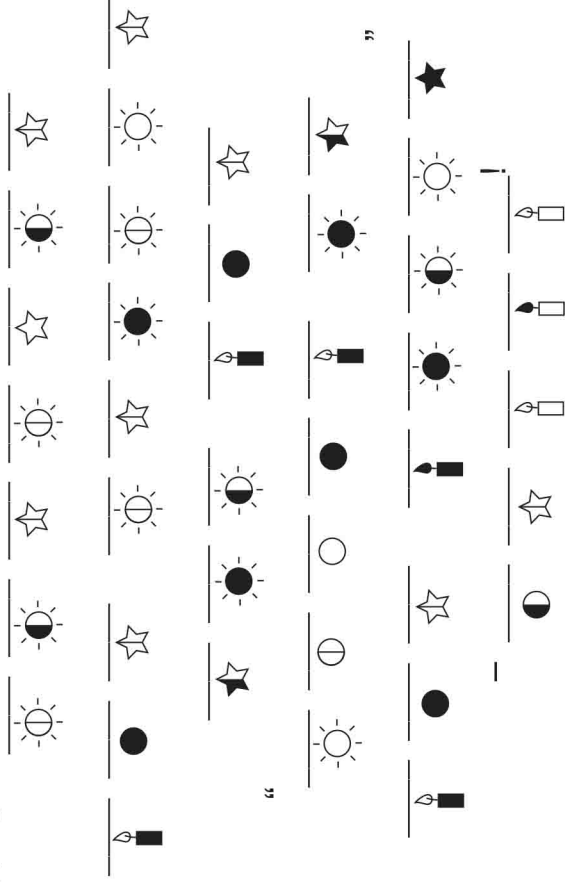
December 17, 2023 • John 1:6-8, 19-28

## John the Baptizer

John the Baptizer was sent from God. Why?

Use the code to find out.

☆ = A	☆ = E	○ = G	⊙ = I	☉ = L	☉ = P	☉ = S	☉ = U
★ = D	★ = F	● = H	◐ = J	◑ = O	◑ = R	◑ = T	◑ = W



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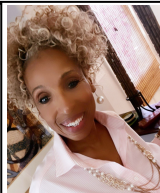


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